

# The Western News

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CHARACTER IS AS IMPORTANT TO STATES AS IT IS TO INDIVIDUALS, AND THE GLORY OF THE ONE IS THE COMMON PROPERTY OF THE OTHER.

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W. J. YATES, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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## Message of President Davis.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the Confederate States:

At the date of your last adjournment the preparations of the enemy for further hostilities had assumed so menacing an aspect as to excite in some minds apprehension of our ability to meet them with sufficient promptness to avoid serious reverses. These preparations were completed shortly after your departure from the seat of government, and the armies of the United States made simultaneous advance on our frontiers, on the western rivers and on the Atlantic coast in numbers so great as to evince their hope of overbearing all resistance by mere weight of numbers. This hope, however, like those previously entertained by our foes, has vanished. In Virginia, their fourth attempt at invasion by armies whose moral success was confidently predicted, has met with decisive repulse. Our noble defenders, under the consummate leadership of their General, have again, at Fredericksburg, inflicted on the forces under General Burnside the like disastrous overthrow as had previously suffered by the successive invading armies commanded by Gen. McClellan, Meade and Pope.

In the West obstinate battles have been fought with varying fortunes, marked by frightful carnage on both sides, but the enemy's hopes of decisive results have again been baffled, while at Vicksburg another formidable expedition has been repulsed with considerable loss on our side and no damage to the assailing force. On the Atlantic coast the enemy has been unable to gain a footing beyond the protecting shelter of his fleets, and the city of Galveston has just been recovered by our forces, which succeeded not only in the capture of the garrison but of one of the enemy's vessels of war, which was carried by landing parties from merchant river steamers. Our fortified positions have everywhere been much strengthened and improved, affording assurance of our ability to meet, with success, the utmost efforts of our enemies, in spite of the magnitude of their preparation for attack.

A review of our history during the two years of our national existence affords cause for congratulation and demands the most fervent expression of our thankfulness to the Almighty Father who has blessed our cause. We are justified in asserting, with a pride, surely not unbecoming, that these Confederate States have added another to the lessons taught by history for the instruction of man; that they have afforded another example of the impossibility of subjugating a people determined to be free; and have demonstrated that no superiority of numbers or available resources can overcome the resistance offered by such valor. In combat, such constancy under suffering and such glorious endurance of privation as have been conspicuously displayed by this people in the defence of their rights and liberties. The anticipations with which we entered into the contest have now ripened into a conviction which is not only shared with us by the common opinion of neutral nations, but is evidently forcing itself upon our enemies themselves. If we mark the history of the present year by resolute perseverance in the path we have hitherto pursued; if by vigorous effort in the development of all our resources for defence; and by the continued exhibition of the same unflinching courage in our soldiers and able conduct in their leaders as have distinguished the past, we have every reason to expect that this will be the closing year of the war. The war, which in its inception, was waged for forcing us back into the Union, having failed to accomplish that purpose, passed into a second stage in which it was attempted to conquer and rule these States as dependent provinces. Defeated in this second design, our enemies have evidently entered upon another, which can have no other purpose than revenge and thirst for blood and plunder of private property. But however implacable they may be, they can have neither the spirit nor the resources required for a fourth year of a struggle uncheered by any hope of success, kept alive solely for the indulgence of mercenary and wicked passions, and demanding so extravagant an expenditure of blood and money as has hitherto been imposed on their people. The advent of peace will be hailed with joy. Our desire for it has never been concealed.

Our efforts to avoid the war, forced on us as it was by the last of conquest and the insane passions of our foes, are known to mankind. But earnest as has been our wish for peace and great as have been our sacrifices and sufferings during the war, the determination of this people has with each succeeding month become more unalterably fixed to endure any sufferings and continue any sacrifices, however prolonged, until their right to independence and the sovereignty and independence of these States shall have been triumphantly vindicated and firmly established.

justly withdrawal. The experience of the past had evinced the futility of any renunciation of such inherent rights, and accordingly the provision for perpetuity contained in the Articles of Confederation of 1778 was omitted in the Constitution of 1789. When, therefore, in 1861 eleven of the States again thought proper, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, to secede from the second union, and to form a third one under an amended constitution, they exercised a right which, being inherent, required no justification to foreign nations, and which international law did not permit them to question. The usages of intercourse between nations do, however, require that official communication be made to friendly powers of all organic changes in the constitution of States, and there was obvious propriety in giving prompt assurance of our desire to continue amicable relations with all mankind. It was under the influence of these considerations that your predecessors, the provisional government, took early measures for sending to Europe Commissioners charged with the duty of visiting the capitals of the different powers, and making arrangements for the opening of more formal diplomatic intercourse.

Prior, however, to the arrival abroad of those Commissioners, the United States had commenced hostilities against the Confederacy by despatching a secret expedition for the reinforcement of Fort Sumter, after an express promise to the contrary, and with a duplicity which has been fully unveiled in a former message. They had also addressed communications to the different Cabinets of Europe, in which they assumed the attitude of being sovereign over this Confederacy, alleging that these independent States were in rebellion against the remaining States of the Union, and threatening Europe with manifestations of their displeasure if it should treat the Confederate States as having an independent existence. It soon became known that these pretensions were not considered abroad to be as absurd as they were known to be at home, nor had Europe yet learned what reliance was to be placed on the official statements of the Cabinet at Washington. The delegation of power granted by these States to the Federal Government to represent them in foreign intercourse had led Europe into the grave error of supposing that their separate sovereignty and independence had been merged into one common sovereignty, and had ceased to have a distinct existence. Under the influence of this error, which all appeals to reason and historical fact were vainly used to dispel, our Commissioners were met by the declaration that foreign governments could not assume to judge between the conflicting representations of the two parties as to the true nature of their previous mutual relations. The governments of Great Britain and France accordingly signified their determination to confine themselves to recognizing the self-evident fact of the existence of a war, and to maintaining a strict neutrality during its progress. Some of the other powers of Europe pursued the same course of policy, and it became apparent that by some understanding, express or tacit, Europe had decided to leave the initiative in all action touching the contest on this continent to the two powers just named, who were recognized to have the largest interests involved, both by reason of proximity and of the extent and intimacy of their commercial relations with the States engaged in war. It is manifest that the course of action adopted by Europe, while based on an apparent refusal to determine the question, or to side with either party, was in point of fact an actual decision against our rights and in favor of the groundless pretensions of the United States. It was a refusal to treat us as an independent government. If we were independent States, the refusal to entertain with us the same international intercourse as was maintained with our enemy was unjust, and was injurious in its effects, whatever may have been the motive which prompted it. Neither was it in accordance with the high moral obligations of that international code whose chief sanction is the conscience of sovereigns and the public opinion of mankind, that those eminent powers should decline the performance of a duty peculiarly incumbent on them, from any apprehension of the consequences to themselves. One immediate and necessary result of their declining the responsibility of a decision which must have been adverse to the extravagant pretensions of the United States, was the prolongation of hostilities to which our enemies were thereby encouraged and which have resulted in nothing but scenes of carnage and devastation on this continent, and of misery and suffering on the other, such as have scarcely a parallel in history. Had those powers promptly admitted our rights to be treated as all other independent nations, none can doubt that the moral effect of such action would have been to dispel the delusion under which the United States have persisted in their efforts to accomplish our subjugation. To the continued hesitation of the same powers in rendering this act of simple justice towards this Confederacy is still due the continuance of the calamities which mankind suffers from the interruption of its peaceful pursuits, both in the old and the new worlds.

There are other matters in which less than justice has been rendered to this people by neutral Europe, and undue advantage conferred on the aggressors in a wicked war. At the inception of hostilities the inhabitants of the Confederacy were almost exclusively agriculturists; those of the United States, to a great extent, mechanics and merchants. We had no commercial marine, while their merchant vessels covered the ocean. We were without a navy, while they had powerful fleets. The advantage which they possessed for inflicting injury on our coasts and harbors was thus counterbalanced in some measure by the exposure of their commerce to attack by private armed vessels. It was known to Europe that within a very few years past the United States had peremptorily refused to accede to proposals for abolishing privateering, on the ground, as alleged by them, that nations owning powerful fleets would thereby obtain undue advantage over those possessing inferior naval forces. Yet no sooner was war flagrant between the Confederacy and the United States, than the maritime powers of Europe issued orders prohibiting either party from bringing prizes into their ports.

This prohibition directed with apparent impar-

ity against both belligerents, was in reality effective against the Confederate States alone, for they alone could find a hostile commerce on the ocean. Merely nominal against the United States, the prohibition operated with intense severity on the Confederacy, by depriving it of the only means of maintaining, with some approach to equality, its struggle on the ocean against the crushing superiority of naval force possessed by its enemies. The value and efficiency of the weapon which was thus wrested from our grasp by the combined action of neutral European powers in favor of a nation which professes openly its intention of ravaging their commerce by privateers in any future war, is strikingly illustrated by the terror inspired among the commercial classes of the United States by a single cruiser of the Confederacy. One national steamer commanded by officers and manned by a crew who are debarré, by the closure of neutral ports, from the opportunity of causing captured vessels to be condemned in their favor as prize, has sufficed to double the rates of marine insurance in Northern ports and consign to forced inaction numbers of Northern vessels, in addition to the direct damage inflicted by captures at sea. How difficult, then, to over-estimate the effects that must have been produced by the hundreds of private armed vessels that would have swept the seas in pursuit of the commerce of our coast, if the means of disposing of their prizes had not been withheld by the action of neutral Europe!

But it is especially in relation to the so-called blockade of our coast that the policy of European powers has been so shaped as to cause the greatest injury to the Confederacy, and to confer advantages on the United States. The importance of this subject requires some development. Prior to the year 1856, the principles regulating this subject were to be gathered from the writings of eminent publicists, the decisions of admiralty courts, international treaties, and the usages of nations. The uncertainty and doubt which prevailed in reference to the true rules of maritime law, in time of war, resulting from the discordant and often conflicting principles announced from such varied and independent sources, had become a grievous evil to mankind. Whether a blockade was allowable against a port not invested by land as well as by sea; whether a blockade was valid by sea if the investing fleet was merely sufficient to render ingress to the blockaded port "evidently dangerous," or whether it was further required for its legality that it should be sufficient "really to prevent access," and numerous other similar questions had remained doubtful and undecided. Animated by the highly honorable desire to put an end "to differences of opinion between neutrals and belligerents, which may occasion serious difficulties and event conflicts," (I quote the official language.) the five great Powers of Europe, together with Sardinia and Turkey, adopted, in 1856, the following "solemn declaration" of principles:

1. Privateering is, and remains abolished.
2. The neutral flag covers enemy's goods, with the exception of contraband of war.
3. Neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under enemy's flag.
4. Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective; that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy.

Not only did this solemn declaration announce to the world the principles to which the signing powers agreed to conform in future wars, but it contained a clause to which those powers gave immediate effect, and which provided that the States, not parties to the Congress of Paris, should be invited to accede to the declaration. Under this invitation every independent State in Europe yielded its assent; at least, no instance is known to me of a refusal, and the United States, while declining to assent to the proposition which prohibited privateering, declared that the three remaining principles were in entire accordance with their own views of international law.

No instance is known in history of the adoption of rules of public law under circumstances of like solemnity, with like unanimity, and pledging the faith of nations with a sanctity so peculiar.

When, therefore, the Confederacy was formed and when neutral powers while deferring action on its demand for admission into the family of nations, recognized it as a belligerent power, Great Britain and France made informal proposals about the same time that their own rights as neutrals should be guaranteed by our acceding, as belligerents, to the declaration of principles made by the Congress of Paris. The request was addressed to our sense of justice, and therefore met immediate favorable response in the resolutions of the Provisional Congress of the 13th August, 1861, by which all the principles announced by the Congress of Paris were adopted as the guide of our conduct during the war, with the sole exception of that relative to privateering. As the right to make use of privateers was one in which neutral nations had, as to the present war, no interest, it was a right which the United States had refused to abandon and which they remained at liberty to employ against us; as it was a right which we were already in actual enjoyment, and which we could not be expected to renounce *flagrante bello* against an adversary possessing an overwhelming superiority of naval forces, it was reserved with entire confidence that neutral nations could not fail to perceive that just reason existed for the reservation. Nor was this confidence misplaced, for the official documents published by the British Government, usually called "Blue Books," contain the expression of the satisfaction that that government with the conduct of the officials who conducted successfully the delicate business confided to their charge.

The solemn declarations of principle, this implied agreement between the Confederacy and the two powers just named, have been suffered to remain inoperative against the menaces and outrages on neutral rights, committed by the United States with unceasing and progressing arrogance during the whole period of the war. Neutral Europe remained passive when the United States, with a naval force insufficient to blockade, effectively, the coast of a single State, proclaimed a paper blockade of thousands of miles of coast extending from the capes Chesapeake to those of Florida, and encircling the Gulf of Mexico from Key West to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Compared

with this monstrous pretension of the United States, the blockades known in history, under the names of the Berlin and Milan decrees, and the British orders in Council, in the years 1806 and 1807 sink into insignificance! Yet those blockades were justified by the powers that declared them, on the sole ground that they were retaliatory; yet those blockades have since been condemned by the publicists of those very powers as violations of international law; yet those blockades evoked angry remonstrances from neutral powers amongst which the United States were the most conspicuous; yet those blockades became the chief cause of the war between Great Britain and the United States in 1812; yet those blockades were one of the principal motives that led to the declaration of the Congress of Paris of 1856, in the fond hope of imposing an enduring check on the very abuse of maritime power, which is now renewed by the United States in 1861 and 1862, under circumstances and with features of aggravated wrong without precedent in history.

The records of our State Department contain the evidence of the repeated and formal remonstrances made by this government to neutral powers against the recognition of this blockade. It has been shown by evidence not capable of contradiction, and which has been furnished in part by the officials of neutral nations, that the few ports of this Confederacy, before which any naval forces at all have been stationed, have been invested so inefficiently that hundreds of entries have been effected into them since the declaration of the blockade; that our enemies have themselves admitted the inefficiency of their blockade in the most forcible manner, by repeated official complaints of the sale, to us, of goods contraband of war, a sale which could not possibly affect their interests if their pretended blockade was sufficient "really to prevent access to our coast;" that they have gone farther, and have alleged their inability to render their paper blockade effective as the excuse for the odious barbarity of destroying the entrance to one of our harbors by sinking vessels loaded with stone in the channel; that our commerce with foreign nations has been intercepted, not by the effective investment of our forts, nor by the seizure of ships in the attempt to enter them, but by the capture on the high seas of neutral vessels by the cruisers of our enemies wherever supposed to be bound to any point on our extensive coast, without enquiry whether a single blockading vessel was to be found at such point; that blockading vessels have left the ports at which they were stationed for distant expeditions, have been absent for many days and have returned, without notice either of the cessation or renewal of the blockade; in a word, that every prescription of maritime law, and every right of neutral nations to trade with a belligerent under the sanction of principles heretofore universally respected, have been systematically and persistently violated by the United States. Neutral Europe has received our remonstrances and has submitted in almost unbroken silence to all the wrongs that the United States have chosen to inflict on its commerce. The Cabinet of Great Britain, however, has not confined itself to such implied acquiescence in these breaches of international law as results from simple inaction, but has in a published despatch of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, assumed to make a change in the principal announcement of the Congress of Paris, to which the faith of the British Government was considered to be pledged; a change too important and too prejudicial to the interests of the Confederacy to be overlooked, and against which I have directed solemn protest to be made, after a vain attempt to obtain satisfactory explanations from the British Government. In a published despatch from her Majesty's Foreign Office, to her Minister at Washington, under date of the 11th of February, 1862, occurs the following passage:

"Her Majesty's Government, however, are of opinion that as the blockade was duly notified and also that a number of ships are stationed and remain at the entrance of a port sufficient really to prevent access to it; or to create an evident danger of entering it; or leaving it; and that those ships do not voluntarily permit ingress or egress, the fact that various ships have successfully escaped through it (as in the particular instance here referred to) will not of itself prevent the blockade from being an effectual one by international law."

The words which I have italicized are an addition made by the British Government of its own authority to a principle the exact terms of which were settled with deliberation with the common consent of civilized nations, and by implied convention with this Government, as already explained, and their effect is clearly to re-open to the prejudice of the Confederacy one of the very disputed questions on the law of blockade which the Congress of Paris professed to settle. The importance of this change is readily illustrated by taking one of our ports as an example. There is "evident danger" in entering the port of Wilmington from the presence of a blockading force, and by this test the blockade is effective. "Access is not really prevented" by the blockading fleet to the same port, for steamers are continually arriving and departing, so that by this test the blockade is ineffective and invalid. The justice of our complaint on this point is so manifest as to leave little room for doubt that further reflection will induce the British Government to give us such assurances as will efface the painful impressions that would result from its language, if left unexplained.

From the foregoing remarks you will perceive that during nearly two years of struggle in which every energy of our country has been exerted for maintaining its very existence, the neutral nations of Europe have pursued a policy which nominally impartial has been practically most favorable to our enemies and most detrimental to us.

The exercise of the neutral right of refusing entry into their ports to prizes taken by both belligerents was eminently hurtful to the Confederacy. It was sternly asserted and maintained.

ternately asserted and waived in such manner as to bear with great severity on us, and to confer signal advantages on our enemy.

It has never yielded from calling to your attention this condition of our relations with the belligerents for various reasons. The chief of these was the fear that a statement of our just grounds of complaint against a course of policy so injurious to our interests might be viewed as an appeal for aid. Unequal as we were in mere numbers and available resources to our enemies, we were conscious of powers of resistance, in relation to which Europe was incredulous, and our remonstrances were therefore peculiarly liable to be misunderstood. Proudly self-reliant, the Confederacy knowing full well the character of the contest in which it was engaged, with its trust in the superior qualities of its population, the superior valor of its soldiers, the superior skill of its Generals, and, above all, in the justice of its cause, felt no need to appeal for the maintenance of its rights to other earthly aids, and it began and has continued this struggle with the calm confidence ever inspired in those who with consciousness of right can invoke the Divine blessing on its cause. This confidence has been so assured that we do not feel under any obligation to give up the prospect of successful issue to our contest. It is, therefore, because our just grounds of complaint can no longer be misinterpreted that I have them clearly before you. It seems to me now proper to give you the information, and to submit to you the evidence, which I have obtained, in relation to the blockade, and which I have preserved and recorded. It is well that those who are to follow us should understand the full nature and character of the tremendous conflict in which the blood of our people has been poured out in vain, and in which they have resisted unaided the shock of a force which would have sufficed to overthrow many of the powers which, by their hesitation in according our rights as an independent nation, imply doubt of our ability to maintain our national existence. It may be, too, that in future times, when our relations with the belligerents are unfortunately arising between this Confederacy and some European power, the recollection of our forbearance under the grievances which I have enumerated, may be evoked with happy influences in preventing any serious disturbance of our relations.

It would not be proper to make any remarks on the subject of our foreign relations without alluding to the fact that the correspondence between the Cabinets of France, Great Britain and Russia, recently published, indicates a gratifying advance in the appreciation by those governments of the true interests of mankind as involved in the war on this continent. It is to the enlightened ruler of the French nation that the public feeling of Europe is indebted for the official exhibition of its sympathy for the sufferings endured by this people, and for the change of its former policy, which has been marked and of its desire for a speedy peace. The clear and direct intimation contained in the language of the French note, that our ability to maintain our independence has been fully established, was not controverted by the answer of either of the Cabinets which it was addressed. It is indeed difficult to conceive a just ground for a longer delay on this subject after reading the following statement of facts contained in the letter emanating from the minister of the Imperial Majesty, which has been published from the very beginning of this war, an equilibrium of forces between the belligerents, which has since been almost constantly maintained, and after the spilling of much blood, they are to-day in this respect, in a situation which has not sensibly changed. Nothing but the progress of the more decisive military operations will shortly occur. According to the latest advices received in Europe, the two armies were, on the contrary, in a condition which permitted neither to hope within a short delay to obtain some advantage, nor to give up the contest, and to accelerate the conclusion of peace."

As this government has never professed the intention of conquering the United States, but has simply asserted its ability to defend itself against being conquered by that power, we may safely conclude that the claims of our country are not likely to be relinquished, and that our nations cannot long be withheld, after so frank and formal an admission of its capacity to cope, on equal terms, with its aggressive foes, and to maintain itself against their attempts to obtain decisive results by force.

It is my painful duty again to inform you of the renewed examples of every conceivable atrocity committed by the armed forces of the United States, at different points within the Confederacy, and which most stamp indelible infamy not only on the perpetrators, but on the nations which have permitted them to do so. The increasing public debt of the great aggregate of the volume of the currency with its necessary concomitant of extravagant prices for all articles of consumption, the want of revenue from a taxation adequate to support the public credit, all unite in admonishing us to energetic efforts to meet the crisis, and to a serious embarrassment to our monetary affairs. It is my conviction that the people of the Confederacy will freely meet taxation on a scale adequate to the maintenance of the public credit and the support of their government. We are, however, in the opinion of the prudent ones to meet exposure to camp and death in battle, what ground can there be to doubt the disposition to devote a tithe of its income and more, if more be necessary, to provide the government with means for ensuring the comfort of its defenders? If our enemies submit to an excise on every commodity they produce, and to the daily presence of the tax-gatherer, with no higher motive than the hope of success in their wicked designs against us, the suggestion of an unwillingness on the part of this people to submit to the taxation necessary for the success of their defense is an imposition on their patriotism that few will be disposed to make, and that none can justify.

The legislation of your last session intended to hasten the funding of outstanding Treasury notes has proved beneficial as shown by the returns annexed to the report of the Secretary of the Treasury. But it is necessary to meet the emergency, and to meet the full extent of the evil. The passage of some enactment, carrying still further the policy of that law by fixing a limitation for funding the notes issued prior to the 1st of December, 1862, will, in the opinion of the Secretary, have the effect to withdraw from circulation nearly the entire sum issued previous to the last named date. If to this be added a revenue from adequate taxation, and a negotiation of bonds guaranteed proportionately by the several States as has already been generally proposed by your committee, enactments spontaneously adopted, there is little doubt that we shall see our finances restored to a sound and satisfactory condition; our circulation relieved of the redundancy now productive of so many mischiefs; and our credit placed on such a basis as will relieve us from further anxiety relative to our resources for the prosecution of the war.

It is true that at its close our debt will be large, but it will be due to our own people, and neither the interest nor the capital will be exported to distant countries, impoverishing others for their benefit. On the return of peace the untold wealth which will spring from our soil will render the burden of taxation far less onerous than is now supposed, especially if we take into account the steady drain of our substance from the large and steady flow of our substance to which we were subjected in the late Union through

nor was this declaration of the want of power or disposition to interfere with our social system confined to a state of peace. Both before and after the actual commencement of hostilities, the President of the United States repeatedly issued official communications to the Cabinets of Great Britain and France, that he was utterly without constitutional power to do the act which he has just committed, and that no possible event, whether the accession of these States to the establishment of a separate Confederacy or in the restoration of the Union, was there any authority by virtue of which he could either restore a disaffected State to the Union by force of arms or make any change in any of its institutions. I refer especially to the verification of this assertion, to the despatches addressed by the Secretary of State of the U. S. under the direction of the President, to the Ministers of the U. S. at London and Paris, under date of 10th and 22d of April, 1861.

The people of this Confederacy then cannot fail to regret, this Proclamation as a violation of their own sagacity in foregoing the use to which the dominant party in the United States intended from the beginning to apply their power, nor can they cease to remember, with devout thankfulness, that it is to their own advantage in the long run, that the progress of an approaching despotism, that their escape from consequences now apparent to the most skeptical. This proclamation will have another salutary effect in calming the fears of those who have constantly evinced the apprehension that this war might end by some reconstruction of the old Union, or some re-arrangement of political relations with the U. S. These fears have never been shared by me, nor have I ever been able to perceive on what basis they could rest. But the proclamation affords the fullest guarantee of the impossibility of such a result, and it affords a state of things which can lead to but one of three possible consequences; the extermination of the slaves, the exile of the whole white population from the Confederacy, or absolute and total separation of these States from the United States.